

Situational Awareness

Before I get into the actual stories I want to present, I want to make a call much like a referee makes a call on a play. It has to do with a catalytic event. One of the concepts that I've come to appreciate and value in my modeling is the concept of the difference between the event and the occasion. Sometimes the signal or message that is passed to us through an experience, an event, it can take place right then at the moment. We become... We become aware and perhaps even fully aware. Or sometimes it can... The occasion of understanding the value and weighted importance of that message, it might come many years later. So that's the relationship between the event and the occasion. The event that brings the message and the occasion of understanding the full. The impact and the catalyst, how it changes, in my case, I often refer to an awakening awareness and the expanding consciousness. That's the change. So the first story involves a delayed burn fuse. And... My brother... My brother and I, I was in sixth grade and he was in second grade. And we figured out that our parents left for work before we left for school and that we arrived home from school before our parents arrived home from work. So with that... With that awakening awareness, with that insight, we decided to skip school. And we ended up skipping school for an entire week. So on that first day... Friday, we were down at the field playing and our father called us to come in. And it was earlier than we would normally be called in for dinner. And so on the way back to the house, my brother looks at me and says, Do you think they know? And I said, Yeah, I think they know. What had happened was my sixth grade teacher had made a call to my parents. It was a concern that she had. That I was doing okay. And of course, my parents was like, What do you mean? Is he doing okay? Well, he hadn't been in school all week. That was a surprise to them. So

during that week of skipping school, we found things to do. And my brother had managed already to burn a little hole in the carpet in the living room, playing with matches or a lighter. I'm not sure which. And so we slyly took an area rug and moved it over that area in the living room so no one could see the small burn spot. On a following day, we came across a firecracker. And so we decided to light it off. So we went out onto the porch. And because of... Because of his already having an issue with playing with fire, we decided, or maybe I decided, I would handle the fire and he would handle the firecracker. So I would light the fuse. And as soon as I lit the fuse, he'd throw it. So what happened was I lit the fuse and it burned quickly and then stopped. And of course, that's where I come up with the phrase delayed burn. Fuse. Because it appears to go out. But a phrase I call situational awareness. I'd seen this before and I suspected that it didn't actually go out. And so as soon as that happened, he didn't throw it. When it appeared to extinguish, he was still holding on to it. And I remember, you know, kind of in a loud voice saying, throw it. Throw it. And so he threw it. And right when he let go of it, the fuse burned and it blew up. And so in that moment, he grasped... He's left-handed. So he grasped his left hand with his right hand and he bent down. And in that moment, I kind of looked up and it was like, oh, God, what have we done? Because, you know, your imagination runs wild. And I thought the worst. That, you know, we had done real harm, you know, to his hand, to his fingers at least. And in that moment, I saw something. It was a really clear day and this very bright light spot appeared in the sky. And a few seconds later, three more appeared. And I told my brother, look. And so it looked like the first dot was trying to avoid the other three dots. And these other three lights were making very acute turns. And it's like triangulation, trying to get a fix on that fourth dot. And then after a few seconds, the three dots kind of got, I guess I would call it triangulation, triangulation. And then after

a few seconds, the first one, the one in the middle, the first dot, and that one blinked out. And within a few seconds of that one blinking out, the other three blinked out. And I remember turning to my brother and saying, well, I don't know what those were, but they're not ours. And then, of course, the event that had just happened with the firecracker came back to mind. And I said, let me see your hand. And he held his hand up. And on the very tip of the middle finger, there was a small blood blister. Thank goodness that's all that had happened. So I guess the thing is, it was a little bit of a traumatic experience in that moment. I was very fearful of what may have happened as a result of our... of our foolishness, but it had passed. And in the end, yes, you know, he was slightly injured, but it was nowhere near as much as my imagination had raced to. You know, oh, my God. You know, it's kind of how I felt. So anyway, that's the first story I wanted to share. Years later. We were at our parents' home, and my brother's twins, two little girls, were playing. And they were running around, goofing off, giggling, you know, like children do. And they ended up by the front door. Now, the rest of the living room was carpeted. But right at the front door, at the threshold, the entryway, there was hardwood floor. And somehow during their play, they ended up falling and kind of falling onto each other on that hardwood floor. So that was the event. Now, the occasion was in that moment when the twins were deciding whether or not just to get up and brush it off and go on with their play. Or if this was going to be an occasion of I'm going to cry and, you know, I'm upset, I got hurt. In that moment, all of a sudden, my brother said, who wants ice cream? And just like that, they forgot all about falling at the door. And they're, I do, I do. And they were running to get their ice cream. So when I reflected back on that, I mean, even in the moment, it struck. It struck me because I knew what he did. But as I reflected back on it, it was a father's love. And it was a diversion of their attention. What he

had done was he had bestowed or granted a pass, a traumatic pass. They had completely forgot about the trauma that they had just experienced when they fell. And so later, my wife was teaching and she introduced me to the concept of focal point or focal points. And the focal point, to me, directly related to what had transpired both with my brother and his twins and what had transpired with my brother and I on the front porch. Playing with fire and the firecracker and the resulting almost serious injury that could have taken place. So, of course, going back to that event with the firecracker, fortunately, I was able to discern the situational awareness because I'd seen those fuses do that before. And I had, you know. You know, kind of hollered, throw it, throw it. And the lesson that I learned upon reflection was cast off throwaways. My brother, one of my other brothers, my other brother, I should say, had talked to me years ago about discerning the takeaways from the throwaways. And this was you. You teach best by example, but you learn best through experience. And in this case, I realized that in that moment of casting off the throwaway, emotionally and spiritually, we have that option, that power to get rid of excess baggage. Because excess baggage. Loads us up. It builds animosity and resentment. When events happen, there is almost always a takeaway. We learn best through experience. We can learn something from it. But you also have to cast off the throwaways and not carry that excess baggage around with you. That's basically emotional garbage. It's a lot of excess baggage that weighs you down and weighs your relationships down. So, again, I think the thing that really struck me about that, and I, the love of a father, the traumatic passage. And I wondered if the experience that my brother and I had on that porch with the firecracker was the father giving us a pass. So that it didn't become that traumatic experience that would be lasting. And the other thing I learned was, I don't know why, but it seems like there's something in the human being that, in our

nature, I looked up. You know, I said, oh, God, I looked up. It's like, what have we done? And what that kind of left me with was, as I reflected back on, always aim high. You know, I will be talking about this much more later in stories and the material. But I do believe that we are of infinite potential. And so always look up. Always aim high. It's what we're meant to do. It's what we're meant. The essence of being is becoming. We're meant to become much more than we currently are. Each and every one of us can continue to grow and evolve. Those cardinal awakenings, awakening awareness, expanding consciousness. You know, the big picture emerges. Yeah. The other thing that, upon reflection, that I learned to value was triangulation. And that is that we solve for the unknowns using the knowns. I remembered a passage from scripture that really impacted me. Ask and it will be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened. And so I think that all comes. Under that heading of aim high. Always be seeking on, you know, how we can fulfill our due portion of that infinite potential. It's there awaiting. It's there waiting for us to act. To pursue. To seek. Ask. Seek. And knock. It's what we're meant to do. So there was one last little story I wanted to share real quick. And it was about that situational awareness with, I had seen this before with the firecracker fuse where it appears that it extinguishes but it's not really out. And then all of a sudden it reignites. And it's a very fast burn and bam. One time I was cutting across multiple railroad tracks in a switching yard. It was a mull yard. It was a steel mill I used to work at. And I was doing something I was not supposed to do. It was it was the midnight shift. The mull yard was dark. And I didn't take the Safeway, what we call the safety walk. I didn't take the designated safety walk that was well lit and it was a single track right there where you could see up and down. I was cutting across this mull yard and as I went to step from behind a drag of mulls that that was already sitting there stationary. I heard a distinct sound

like a ping and it was a situational awareness. I'd heard that ping many times before. It was the ping of what happens when a pebble gets kicked up onto the steel rail and the steel wheel from the train runs over it and crushes it. It was a very distinct ring almost. And I recognized what it was. And in that instant, I jumped back. And when I did that drag of railroad cars, it was actually being pushed by a locomotive that was way down the mill around the corner. And the cars themselves were almost silent as they were coming up. And it was doing a pretty good clip. And if I hadn't heard that pebble, I would have been run over. And probably wouldn't be here. So this goes back to signs and indicators, clues and cues. If I hadn't heard that and recognized what it was, that situational awareness, I would have been another statistic. Well, that's all for now. Signing off.